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LA MORALE DES PHILOSOPHES CHINOIS: Extraits des livres classiques de la Chine et de l'Annam. Par J. L. DE LANNE-SAN, Ancien Gouverneur de General de l'Indo-Chine. Paris: F. Alcan, 1896. Pp. 125, 18mo. Fr. 2.50.

IF the viceroy of British India should publish a book on the civilization of the Hindoos it would command attention independently of its literary or scientific value. Thus the work under review derives its chief interest from the fact that it is the production of a governor-general of Indo-China, the empire which the French have been building in the farther East to compensate for the loss of India.

Just how or when he prepared it the author does not inform us; but the book reveals its origin as the outcome of a praiseworthy attempt to understand the guiding principles of the people over whom he was called to rule. He was struck with the fact that candidates for the civil service were required by the old laws to pass examinations in letters, history, and philosophy, a system borrowed from China. On investigation he discovered that the text-books were Chinese, the most important of which were the Four Books of Confucius and Mencius. These he set himself to study in the somewhat diluted translation of Pauthier, tabulating the sayings of the Chinese sages relating to personal conduct, family discipline, and public government. The effect on his mind was profound, as it must be on the mind of any competent investigator. He finds there ethical doctrines of a higher order than those which prevailed in Greece or Rome. They compare not unfavorably with the teachings of the Christian church, and in his view have the advantage of being less encumbered with transcendental elements.

It is not surprising that the author, wholly unacquainted with the Chinese language, should fall into some mistakes. The most serious are (1) that of supposing that the worship of ancestors enjoined in the Four Books constitutes the entire religion of the Chinese, whereas the popular religion is a complex mixture of three systems into which ancestor worship enters as a common element; (2) that in their scheme of morals the Chinese take no account of a future life and make no appeal to supernatural sanctions.

Confucius, it is true, discouraged inquiry into the mysteries of the unseen world, but the Chinese, including his followers, hold in general a strong belief in the reality of a life to come. The worship of ancestors, in which their spirits are invoked as living and conscious, implies it. That shadowy conception has gained precision and force from

Buddhism, which makes the transmigration of souls the basis of retribution. Nor is the belief in a moral government of the universe more firmly held by any than by the followers of Confucius, whom our author looks on as Sadducean skeptics. To them today, as to their great teacher twenty-three centuries ago, heaven is the embodiment of a sovereign power that makes for righteousness. "On families who treasure up good actions, Heaven sends down a hundred blessings; on families that treasure up evil actions, Heaven sends down a hundred miseries," says their oldest book; and no one doubts the truth of the saying. "Plant a bean, you gather a bean; plant a melon, you gather a melon," is a maxim universally known, which connects cause and consequence in the chain of law. One aspect of that law is set forth still more impressively in the following saying: "Heaven's net is vast, and its meshes invisible, but no sinner can slip through."

(3) Throughout his book, as in his title, the author assumes that the two or three sages whom he cites are the sole representatives of Chinese philosophy. He accordingly asserts that Chinese philosophers never occupied themselves with metaphysical questions such as those concerning the freedom of the will, etc. The fact is that prior to the triumph of Confucian orthodoxy all China was boiling over with hot discussions on every conceivable phase of man and nature, discussions which answer pretty nearly to those of the sophists in Greece. A stock subject was the moral quality of human nature. It gave rise to three schools—those who regarded human nature as evil; those who asserted its goodness, and those again who maintained that it is neither good nor evil, but may be made the one or the other by education. A report of one of these discussions our author quotes from Mencius as some people quote a chapter from the Book of Job, accepting all the utterances as equally orthodox!

The object of the author, it must be confessed, is not to enlighten the student of international ethics, but to convince his countrymen of their mistake in "speaking of China and Annam as semi-barbarous regions." That the sayings which he cites exhibit a lofty ideal is not to be disputed. He finds love to men inculcated as the strongest of social bonds and duty measured by a golden rule identical in substance with that laid down by Jesus Christ. His inference of the high civilization of those countries would be just if all the strata of society were saturated with the maxims of Confucius, which is far from being true; even where those maxims are known and professed they cannot be described as "quick and powerful and sharper than a two-edged

sword." Their transforming energy is not to be compared with that of the gospel of Christ.

PEKING, CHINA.

W. A. P. MARTIN.

THE THRESHOLD COVENANT, or the Beginning of Religious Rites. By H. CLAY TRUMBULL. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896. Pp. xi + 335. \$2.

DR. CLAY TRUMBULL, who by his travels and writings has done much to bring eastern life and custom home to our mind, first gave us in his book entitled *The Blood Covenant*, which appeared in 1885, a deeper insight into the conceptions and motives underlying the primitive forms of sacrifice and blood union in their relations to the deity and to human fellowship. He opened new avenues of religious and psychological research for both the theologian and the anthropologist. To understand the meaning and trace the origin of religious and social rites in prehistoric times, something more is required than mere knowledge of ethnological facts and power of combination. Only that psychological intuition which puts the student into sympathy with primitive man succeeds in solving prehistoric questions best. And this happy faculty Dr. Trumbull possesses in an eminent degree.

That the intermingling of blood was, or is, used as a means of uniting persons for a lifelong friendship was a fact well known since the time of Herodotus. But that the very meals or wine used in marriage ceremonies, that almost every rite or symbol of consecration is historically connected with this primitive custom, came upon the scholarly world as a revelation. The whole idea of sacrifice, which Robertson Smith in his *Religion of the Semites* fails to explain satisfactorily, appears in a new light. There is a longing of soul for soul in the most primitive man which the evolutionist overlooks, and this *plus* makes the researches of Dr. Trumbull so suggestive and fruitful. "A covenant of blood, recognized as the closest and the holiest and the most indissoluble compact conceivable" naturally prompted a desire for a similar "union with the divine nature." Here is the whole process of sacrificial worship explained.

In treating, however, of the signs of the blood covenant on the door-post made at the passover and their many parallels, our author was led to a special study of the *threshold rites*, which gave rise to the book before us. And a highly instructive and valuable book it is, indeed.